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Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 05490 010605Z
ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 L-01 H-01 CU-02 OC-01 CCO-00
SCA-01 NSC-05 NSCE-00 /033 W
----------012254Z 123200 /66
R 311310Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3437

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 5490

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CASC
SUBJECT: VISIT OF RABBI BERNARD KIMMEL AND MR. MAX EIS TO EGYPT

REF: STATE 60661

1. RABBI BERNARD KIMMEL AND MR. MAX EIS CONTACTED EMBASSY MARCH 30. KIMMEL REQUESTED EMBASSY ASSISTANCE IN REMOVING JUDAICA FROM CAIRO KAIRITE SYNAGOGUE VIA DIPLOMATIC POUCH. ON AMBASSADOR'S INSTRUCTIONS EMBASSY ADVISED KIMMEL THAT SUCH REMOVAL WOULD BE ILLEGAL AND EMBASSY WOULD NOT BE PARTY TO EFFORT. KIMMEL SAID NUMBER OF VALUABLE SCROLLS DATING TO NINTH CENTURY WERE IN HANDS OF SMALL REMAINING JEWISH KAIRITE COMMUNITY HERE AND HE FEARED SCROLLS WOULD BE LOST IF NOT REMOVED. HE ALSO SAID SO FAR AS HE KNEW EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES WERE NOT AWARE SCROLLS EXISTED AND THAT TO RAISE ISSUE WITH THEM WOULD RESULT, HE BELIEVED, IN INVENTORYING OF ITEMS AND ALMOST CERTAIN REFUSAL ON PART OF EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES TO ALLOW THEIR REMOVAL. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT IF EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES NOW LEARNED OF EXISTENCE OF SCROLLS, WHICH JEWISH COMMUNITY OBVIOUSLY HAS KNOWN ABOUT FOR MANY YEARS, IT MIGHT APPEAR THEY HAD BEEN DELIBERATLY CONCEALED AND CAUSE "TROUBLE FOR JEWS REMAINING IN CAIRO."

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2. KIMMEL SAID THAT STATE DEPARTMENT HAD ASSISTED IN SIMILAR EFFORT TO REMOVE JUDAICA FROM INDIA IN 1968 (A LARGE CRATE OF SCROLLS) AND HAD ALSO ASSISTED IN REMOVING ITEMS FROM EGYPT IN 1966 AND AGAIN IN 1970 (EMBASSY HAS NO RECORD OF ANY SUCH ASSISTANCE BEING EXTENDED). KIMMEL SAID THIS ACTION WAS TAKEN IN ORDER TO "SAVE JEWISH ANTIQUITIES THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN OTHERWISE LOST."

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3. KIMMEL SAID HE WOULD CONTINUE "OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS" TO SOLICIT EMBASSY ASSISTANCE IN REMOVING THE ANTIQUITIES DESPITE EMBASSY'S REFUSAL TO ASSIST IN ABOVE SCHEME. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT HE MIGHT TAKE MATTER UP WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.

4. KIMMEL SAID IF ITEMS COULD BE TAKEN TO US THEY WOULD GO TO JUDAH L. MAGNES MEMORIAL MUSEUM IN BERKELEY,
WHERE HIS' WIFE IS CURATOR OF JUDAICA, WITH COPIES TO LIBRARY OF CONGRESS. EMBASSY ADVISED KIMMEL TO WORK ONLY THROUGH ESTABLISHED CHANNELS IN HIS EFFORT TO REMOVE SCROLLS AND TO INFORM EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS OF MUSEUM'S INTEREST. KIMMEL SAID HE WOULD "NEVER CONSIDER RAISING ISSUE WITH EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS" AND ADDED THAT HE "MIGHT ATTEMPT TO CARRY TWO OR THREE SCROLLS" WITH HIM WHEN HE LEAVES EGYPT SOON. EMBOFF STRONGLY ADVISED AGAINST SURREPTITIOUS REMOVAL. KIMMEL OPINED THAT "SOONER OR LATER" EMBASSY WOULD AGREE TO REMOVE THE SCROLLS THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS.

5. COMMENT: CAO RECALLS THAT SIMILAR EFFORT TO USE DIPLOMATIC POUCH WAS MADE BY JUDAH L. MAGNES MUSEUM DIRECTOR (SEYMOUR FROMER) IN SUMMER 1974. AT THAT TIME FROMER WAS COUNSELLED STRONGLY AGAINST ANY ILLEGALITY RELATIVE TO JUDAICA IN EGYPT.
MATTHEWS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: JEWS, CULTURAL PROPERTY, DIPLOMATIC POUCHES
Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 31-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
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Retention: 0
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SAS ID: 3049693
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TAGS: CASC, EG, (KIMMEL, BERNARD)
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